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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Trion City Schools Pre-K creates new Outdoor Learning Environment**

### ***Teachers inspired by DECAL's Best Practices Training on taking the classroom outside***

**ATLANTA, Ga., (May 30, 2012)** – Pre-K educators from Trion City Schools in Chattooga County took seriously the training they received recently called “Now Go Outside and Play.” The two-day regional training for lead teachers was offered by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning in collaboration with Georgia State University. This training focused on taking the classroom outside.

Upon returning to their school, Pre-K Lead Teachers Janice Bowers and Cathy Ray met with Assistant Principal Angie Bowman, along with Art Teacher Darlene Rowe and Music Teacher Tina Lee to create a plan for a new outdoor playground, complete with a tricycle track, a house, a fire station and multiple places to extend early learning related to the alphabet and numbers. Just like that, the playground was established and is now being enjoyed by students.

“Early education is valuable and important because a child’s most significant brain development occurs in the first five years and forms the basis for future learning,” said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle.

“Through this regional training and collaboration with Georgia State University, we are proud to support our teachers and providers. The quality work they do, like this creative outdoor playground, makes them vital members of our team.”

Cheryl Turner, assistant project director and consultant of Best Practices Training at Georgia State University was impressed. “Some teachers come to training, learn new things, jot down lots of their favorite ideas and that may be where it ends. Others accept the challenge to do something that changes their practice. These teachers rose to the challenge and I am very proud of them.”

Turner said the overall intent of the Outdoor Play training was to increase teacher awareness of the far-reaching benefits of outdoor play for children’s learning and skill development. She believes being outdoors stimulates the physical and multi-sensory ways in which young children naturally learn.

“Our aim was to inspire teachers to begin viewing their outdoor space as a natural extension of the classroom environment, where the various needs of the ‘whole child’ could and should be addressed,” Turner explained. “Doing that requires not only rethinking and repurposing the use of present outdoor space, but it also challenges teachers to examine ways they interact with children during outdoor play. It shifts the paradigm of how ‘recess’ is often viewed.”

### **About Bright from the Start**

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov).

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